

The Tai Ya of Thailand



The Tai Ya are a Tai ethnic group, most of whom live in south-central Yunnan province, China. In the late 1920s and 1930s, several waves of Tai Ya migrated to Chiang Rai province, Thailand, for economic and religious reasons. Those who migrated were almost all Christians. The majority of the Tai Ya in China, however, practice traditional religion.

The Tai Ya of Thailand today are a relatively small ethnic group, living among and marrying with Northern Thai and other peoples. There is now only one village in Thailand where the majority of the population is Tai Ya.

The ethnic Tai Ya population in Thailand is about 1000. The speaker population is lower, however, as many Tai Ya people cannot speak the language. Most Tai Ya speak Central Thai or Northern Thai very well.

In comparison with those of China, Thailand's Tai Ya practice their traditional culture to a lesser degree. The Tai Ya of Thailand maintain some contact with the Tai Ya of China through regular visits. While their forefathers walked for many weeks to migrate from China to Thailand, today's Tai Ya fly on airplanes to visit their relatives in China.

Primary Religion:
Christian

Disciples (Matt 28:19):
20% or even much higher

Churches:
1

Scripture Status (Matt 28:20):
None

Population (date):
500 (2007)

TAI YA HOMELAND



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Have They Heard The Gospel?

Is The Word Of God Translated?	No. Some sources say that Bible portions were translated into Tai Ya by the wife of missionary William C. Dodd, using the Northern Thai script, and printed in Thailand in 1922. Other sources report that these portions may have actually been written in another language with a similar name. In any case, the Tai Ya of Thailand do not currently have access to any such Bible portions in their language.
Hindrances to Scripture Distribution	None
How Have They Responded to the Gospel?	The community of Tai Ya in Thailand was Christian from its beginning.
Other Forms of Gospel Presentations Available	Recordings: Yes.
Cross-Cultural Missionaries Needed	No. The Tai Ya in Thailand are a "reached" people group .

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Group Description

Bilingualism

The ethnic Tai Ya population in Thailand is about 1000. The speaker population is lower, however, as many Tai Ya people cannot speak the language.

Primary Language of Wider
Communication or Trade

Most Tai Ya speak Central Thai or Northern Thai very well

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Status of Christianity

Religion and Response

Number of Pastors	Many. Tai Ya pastors have even planted churches in other areas of Thailand.
Call Themselves Christians	90% or more.
Believe in Jesus As Their Only God and Savior	Greater than 20%--possibly much higher.
Number of Churches	There is at least one church that is majority Tai Ya (in the one village that is majority Tai Ya); however, Tai Ya in other places attend churches that are ethnically mixed.
Number of Communities	8
Comment	Seven of these represent communities of a few families of Tai Ya in towns and cities; there is only one village that is majority Tai Ya, and it has a church.
History of When Christianity Began	1910
History of Christianity By Whom	American missionary to the Tai peoples William C. Dodd and Northern Thai missionaries.
History of Significant Christian Events	First church started at Saeng Kho in China as a result of Dodd's evangelism. 1920s-1930s migration of many Christians from China to Thailand at the invitation of Western and Thai missionaries who had come from Chiang Rai, Thailand.